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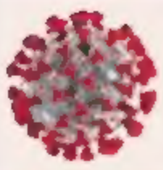


VIRUS VARIANT WITH UNUSUALLY HIGH MUTATION COUNT FOUND

B.1.1.529 has been found in South Africa, Botswana & Hong Kong; the Centre has asked states to test travellers from these places

UNFAMILIAR MUTATIONS SPARK CONCERN

The new coronavirus variant has at least 32 spike mutations, compared to 16 for Delta. It may not just spread more efficiently, but might be able to get around parts of the immune system, said researcher Richard Lessells. Some of the mutations are also unfamiliar to scientists. So far the variant has been seen spreading especially among young people, reports said

ORIGINS IN UNTREATED HIV PATIENT?

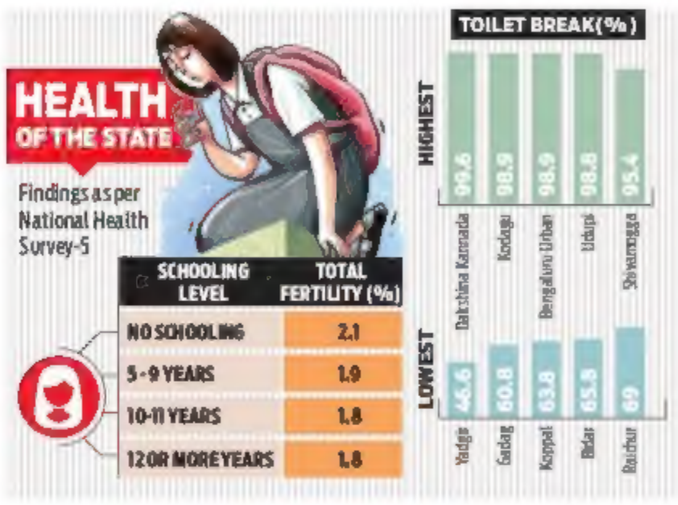
- The variant could have evolved during the chronic infection of a person with compromised immunity, which can prolong infection
- The variant has also been found in Botswana and Hong Kong among travellers from South Africa, as per authorities. World Health Organization officials have met to discuss B.1.1.529 | P12,16

100

CASES LINKED TO THE VARIANT DETECTED IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Domestic violence rose during Covid, reveals survey



RANJANI MADHAVAN @ Bengaluru

THE latest National Health Survey-5 has revealed that domestic violence against married women and sexual violence against young women have increased in Karnataka, compared to the previous survey findings. From 20.6 per cent, the prevalence of spousal violence against women aged between 18 and 49 years has risen to 44.4 per cent. The ratio of young women, aged between 18 and 29, who experienced sexual violence by age 18, also shot up from 10.3 per cent to 11 per cent.

Women in the state experienced domestic violence in the form of being slapped, pushed, shaken, having something thrown at them, arms twisted, hair pulled, being kicked, dragged, beaten up, punched with a fist or something that could hurt her, choked or burnt, the report stated.

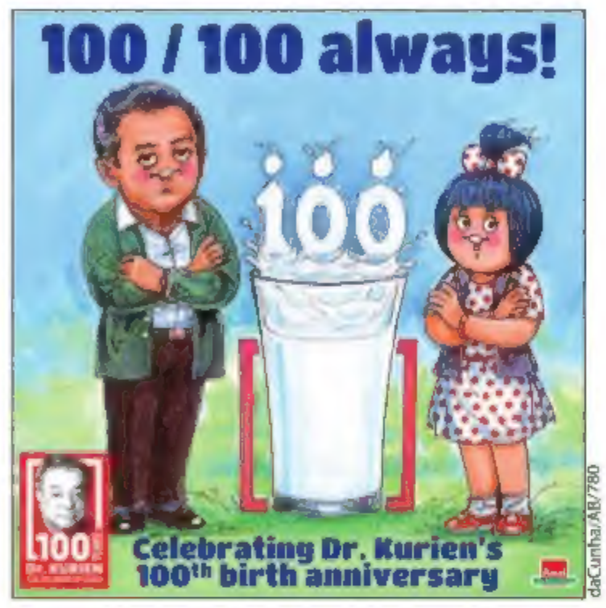
The experience of spousal violence is slightly higher among women in rural areas (49 per cent) than in urban areas (48 per cent).

"Eight per cent of married women in the age group of 18-49 reported that their husbands physically forced them to have sex even when they did not want to, and 6 per cent reported that their husband forced them with threats or in some other way to perform sexual acts they did not want to," the survey noted.

Domestic violence increased, especially during the pandemic, with husbands out of work and spending more time at home, said Mamatha Yajaman, a core group member of the NGO Gamana Mahila Samooha which works with survivors of violence.

"In some cases, violence meted out by the husband is habitual. In other cases, it happens when he is under the influence of alcohol. We have observed that the police are often not helpful, with the entire system functioning in a patriarchal manner. Owing to this, women do not get justice even if they come forward to complain," Mamatha said.

CONTINUED ON: P5



Congress becomes pawn in TMC's pan-India plans

Political observers point out that by upstaging the grand old party in Meghalaya, the Trinamool Congress is indirectly helping the BJP

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Guwahati

WITH 12 of the 17 Congress MLAs in Meghalaya joining the Trinamool Congress (TMC) overnight, the grand old party appears to have become the biggest victim of the Mamata Banerjee-led party's ambition of becoming a pan-India rival to the Bharatiya Janata Party.

After its hard-fought victory in West Bengal early this year, the TMC is on an acquisition spree to draw disgruntled leaders from other parties, mostly Congress. By doing so, it is virtually hijacking the political space hitherto occupied by the grand old party.

The TMC had already set its sights on BJP-ruled Tripura and Goa to expand its base outside Bengal. Meghalaya is the latest addition to the list. The late-night coup in Shillong relegated the Congress to a smaller party and effectively made the TMC the state's main opposition party. The development comes 14 months ahead of the Assembly polls in Meghalaya, which is ruled by a coalition of parties headed by the National People's Party, a BJP ally.

Infighting in the Congress, especially after Shillong MP Vincent H Pala took over as the state unit chief two months ago, is said to have triggered the dramatic developments on Wednesday night. Former chief minister Mukul Sangma was the sole contender for the CM post in case the Congress returns to power in 2023 and he felt threatened by Pala's appointment as PCC chief.

Congress insiders in the state admitted the TMC had dealt a body blow to the party facing a depleting popularity ever since the BJP's emergence as a powerhouse nationwide in 2014.

Political observers, however, pointed out that by targeting the Congress, the TMC is indirectly helping the BJP.

As regards Goa, the TMC's entry would hurt only the Congress as the BJP has its vote bank intact. Similarly, the TMC is trying to make inroads into Tripura at the expense of the Congress and the Left parties. Thursday's civic election in the state was its launch pad.

Mamata's much-hyped meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday and her not calling on Congress chief Sonia Gandhi is to be seen in the above context. P9

'Congress failed as Oppn'

On Thursday, former CM Mukul Sangma justified his decision to switch sides saying the Congress was failing as an opposition party and that TMC could be the pan-India alternative to the BJP. "We looked at available options and reached out to people and friends," he told reporters

Centre agrees to review ₹8L EWS cap for NEET

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it is ready to revisit the ₹8 lakh annual income criteria for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) reservation category.

The government assured the apex court Bench, led by Justice D Y Chandrachud, that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-PG) counselling would be deferred for four weeks till a decision was taken on the EWS quota.

The submission came in a case filed by NEET aspirants challenging a July 29 notification announcing 27% quota for Other Backward Class (OBC) and 10% reservation for EWS in the All India Quota (AIQ) category.

Senior Advocate Arvind P Datar, appearing for the petitioners (students), suggested that the implementation of the EWS could be postponed to next academic year, as the admissions for this year are already delayed.

The Bench, which also comprised Justices Surya Kant, and Vikram Nath, asked the Solicitor General if the implementation of the constitutional amendment could be pushed to he next academic year.

"What happens is that we are at the end of November. Suppose you complete it by the end of December and then implementation etc and then the terms would begin only sometime in February-March. Two months, the students are losing the time. This is something you may want to consider," Justice DY Chandrachud questioned Mehta. He replied that it might be a difficult proposition as the Government wants to take steps as per the constitutional amendment providing for economic reservation.

Justice Kant said, "The EWS quota is a very enabling and progressive kind of reservation and all States should support the Centre in its endeavour".

The Bench said that the only question is that determination of the category should be in a scientific manner and it appreciates that the Centre has taken a decision to revisit the criteria earlier fixed.

NO POTENTIAL DEFERMENT FOR OBC QUOTA

While a possible deferment of the EWS quota is being discussed, Advocate Shashank Ratnoo, appearing on behalf of some OBC candidates, requested that the application of reservation to OBC students should not be deferred as the Centre is planning to revisit the EWS criteria. The Bench said that it has not said anything on OBC students and is not disposing of the petition

ITC begins clinical trial for coronavirus nasal spray

ITC has confirmed it is developing a nasal spray for preventing Covid-19 and said it has initiated clinical trials for the product. The spray is meant to halt the virus at the entry point of the nasal cavity

TAKE YOUR SHOT
Nov 24 79,85,803 doses
Nov 25 74,59,819 doses
TOTAL: 220.17.25.806

NATIONWIDE	NOV 24	NOV 25
Fresh cases	9,283	9,119
Recoveries	10,949	10,264
Deaths	437	396

KARNATAKA	NOV 24	NOV 25
Fresh cases	254	306
Recoveries	546	224
Deaths	3	2

EXPRESS READ

HC seeks Centre's stand on booster shots

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the Centre to clarify its stand on administering a booster dose to those who are fully vaccinated, saying it does not want a second-wave-like situation.

WITH THIS ISSUE

INDULGE

32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

ALL SET TO TAKE OFF

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits an exhibition on Noida International Airport, for which he laid the foundation stone on Thursday in Jewar. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is standing on his left | P11 | P10

Raided officials have at least 4 times more illegal assets

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths, who raided 15 government officials on Wednesday and unearthed disproportionate assets worth several crores of rupees, have found that some of them had amassed wealth 400-500 per cent disproportionate to their known sources of income. Among those raided, the assets of a former Project Director of Nirmithi Kendra, estimated at Rs 18.20 crore, was found to to be disproportionate by more than 879 per cent.

The officials of the anti-corruption agency had seized valuables such as cash, gold, silver, vehicles and had also found documents related to properties during the search and seizure operation on Wednesday. Sources said that the value of the seized items was estimated even as further investigation such as opening of bank lockers continued on Thursday. The estimation was done based on documents produced by the accused officials and information gathered from various sources. As per the estimates, Vasudev R N, the former Project Director of Nirmithi Kendra in Bengaluru Rural, has assets worth Rs 18,20,63,868, which is 879.53 per cent disproportionate to his known sources of income. The ACB teams had searched six locations connected to Vasudev and had found documents related to five houses and eight residential sites in Bengaluru, four houses in Sompura of Nelamangala talulk, 10.20 acres of agricultural land in Nelamangala and Magadi taluks, 850 gm of gold, 9.5 kg of silver, Rs 15 lakh in cash and household articles worth Rs 98 lakh. P4

PARAM BIR APPEARS BEFORE CRIME BRANCH

Mumbai's former police chief Param Bir Singh, who faces at least five charges of extortion in Maharashtra and had been missing for months, appeared at the Crime Branch Unit 11 office on Thursday | P10

WAR AGAINST NATURE

Smaller animals in poachers' sights

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

CRIMES IN THE WILD PART 2

DISTURBING trends are coming to the fore as regards wildlife crimes. Smugglers and poachers, in cahoots with locals, now prefer to target smaller protected terrestrial and aquatic animal species and their products over larger species like wild cats and herbivores. From skins of animals like tigers, leopards and deer, poachers have now shifted focus to products derived from smaller animal species.

Wildlife experts are convinced about this while noting an increased frequency of abandoned bags with small animal species, left behind when pursued by law enforcement agencies. "In the period from the late 1990s to 2013, many cases of poachers with pelts of tigers, leopards and other wild animals were traced. Now, gradually this has shifted to small turtles, tortoises, pangolins and other smaller species. Over the last few years, we have even seen a rise in cases of aquatic species being targeted," a wildlife crime expert informed *The New Indian Express*. "This is evident from the increased number of cases of smaller protected animal species being found stacked in gunny bags, suitcases, shoulder bags and other luggage."

Sleuths of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau have pointed out that the number of cases of Ambergris (a solid waxy substance which comes from the intestine of the sperm whale, a protected aquatic species) has also increased over the last few years.

Cases of ambergris smuggling from coastal areas of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are also rising. Despite this, there is no strict vigil in lesser known coastal areas, which are used by smugglers to move ambergris, which is very expensive and in much demand in the perfume-making industry. P7

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100+ Quality Checks
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